IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended): A method for maintaining software products implemented in a plurality of files in client computer systems (12) located decentralized relative to at least one central software maintenance institution ~~(10, 24)~~ wherein the client computer systems are connectable with the at least one central software maintenance institution via a network with which they are connectable with, the method comprising the steps of:

providing product information for a product in the network system for making ~~it~~ the product information available for said plurality of client systems;

the method being characterized by the step of : ; and

performing a software maintenance action for the product from ~~the~~ a client site by downloading the data required for said software maintenance action from a sequence of repositories, wherein said sequence of repositories comprising includes at least one a top-level repository ~~more dedicated for at least one particular client system (12)~~ storing a set of files for the product and at least one a local-level repository ~~less dedicated~~ storing a first subset of files for the product, wherein the first subset of files is specific for said a given client system ~~(12)~~.

2. (Currently Amended): The method according to claim 1 ~~in which~~ downloading is decoupled from activating a downloaded program ~~by downloading files in an inactive format which comprises all information required for a later activation of said program~~ wherein the sequence of repositories includes a mid-level repository storing a second subset of files for the product, wherein the second subset of files includes at least one of a version update, a fix, and nation-specific files.

3. (Currently Amended): The method according to claim ~~1~~ 2 in which a fall back to an older program version can be is achieved by inactivating the a newer version and activating (240) the older version

4. (Currently Amended): The method according to claim ~~1~~ 2 in which said step of performing said maintenance action serves for an upgrade of a program on at least one target system and said step ~~comprising~~ including the steps of:

generating (~~130, 150, 170~~) an input list of files downloadable from said ~~at least two~~ sequence of repositories (~~20, 22, 24~~); ;

generating a list of files present on said target client system (12); ;

comparing (210) said lists, the list of files downloadable from said sequence of repositories with the list of files present on said target client system; and

downloading (~~220~~) a plurality of files, wherein the plurality of files includes only files which are not yet present in the target client system.

5. (Currently Amended): The method according to ~~the preceding~~ claim 4 in which a total input list is generated by subsequently accessing the repositories and by merging ~~said~~ input lists for each repository with a priority of more local files.

6. (Currently Amended): The method according to ~~the preceding~~ claim 1 further comprising the step of integrating files into the target system which have been identified by a look-aside procedure as residing in a neighbor system easier to be accessed by the target system than one of said repositories (~~20, 22, 24~~).

7. (Currently Amended): A system in which the method according to any of claims 1 to 6 ~~can be performed~~ for maintaining software products, the system comprising:

at least one central software maintenance site;

a network;

a plurality of client computer systems decentralized relative to the at least one central software maintenance site, wherein the client computer systems are connectable with the at least one central software maintenance institution via the network; and

a sequence of repositories, wherein the sequence of repositories provides product information for a product in the network system for making the product information available for said plurality of client systems, wherein said sequence of repositories includes at least a top-level repository storing a complete set of files for the product and a

local-level repository storing a first subset of files for the product, wherein the subset of files is specific for a given client system,

wherein a given client computer system from within the plurality of client computer systems performs a software maintenance action for the product by downloading data required for said software maintenance action from the sequence of repositories.

8. (Currently Amended): The system according to the ~~preceding~~ claim 7, wherein the sequence of repositories is provided as ~~in which a file system hierarchy is provided~~ in a plurality of hierarchically arranged repositories ~~(20, 22, 24)~~.

9. (Currently Amended): The system according to ~~the preceding~~ claim 7, ~~in which~~ said at least one repository ~~(20, 22) is an overlay repository in which basically delta information is provided~~ wherein the sequence of repositories includes a mid-level repository storing a second subset of files for the product, wherein the second subset of files includes at least one of a version update, a fix, and nation-specific files.

10. (Currently Amended): The system according to ~~the preceding~~ claim 8 ~~in which country level (22) and system level (20)~~ repositories are ~~provided~~, further comprising:

at least one neighbor system, wherein the software maintenance action includes integrating files into the target system which have been identified by a look-aside procedure as residing in the at least one neighbor system easier to be accessed by the target system than one of said repositories.

11. (Currently Amended): The system according to the preceding claim 7, further comprising ~~in which~~ shadow repositories are ~~provided~~ for at least a subset of the sequence of repositories.

12. (Currently Amended): ~~Computer~~ A computer program product, in a computer readable medium, for maintaining software products implemented in a plurality of files in client computer systems located decentralized relative to at least one central software

maintenance institution wherein the client computer systems are connectable with the at least one central software maintenance institution via a network, the computer program product comprising ~~code portions adapted for performing the steps according to the~~ method according to one of the preceding claims 1 to 6 when said program is loaded into a computer device :

instructions for providing product information for a product in the network system for making the product information available for said plurality of client systems; and

instructions for performing a software maintenance action for the product from a client site by downloading data required for said software maintenance action from a sequence of repositories, wherein said sequence of repositories includes at least a top-level repository storing a complete set of files for the product and a local-level repository storing a first subset of files for the product, wherein the first subset of files is specific for a given client system.

13. (Currently Amended): ~~Computer~~ The computer program product ~~stored on a computer-usable medium comprising computer-readable program means for causing a computer to perform the method of any one of the claims 1 to 6~~ according to claim 12, wherein the sequence of repositories includes a mid-level repository storing a second subset of files for the product, wherein the second subset of files includes at least one of a version update, a fix, and nation-specific files.

14. (New): The computer program product according to claim 13 in which the instructions for performing said maintenance action serves for an upgrade of a program on at least one target system and the instructions for performing said maintenance action includes:

instructions for generating an input list of files downloadable from said sequence of repositories;

instructions for generating a list of files present on said target client system;

instructions for comparing the list of files downloadable from said sequence of repositories with the list of files present on said target client system; and

instructions for downloading a plurality of files, wherein the plurality of files includes only files which are not yet present in the target client system.

15. (New): The computer program product according to claim 14 in which a total input list is generated by subsequently accessing the repositories and by merging input lists for each repository with a priority of more local files.

16. (New): The computer program product according to claim 12, further comprising instructions for integrating files into the target system which have been identified by a look-aside procedure as residing in a neighbor system easier to be accessed by the target system than one of said repositories.